

The Role of Package Design in a Low-Involvement Category:
So-Called “Peripheral” Cues Serve as “Primary” Motivators

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Abstract

This paper explores the dynamic, untapped relationship between the Elaboration Likelihood Model of persuasion and the effectiveness of a product's package design. After conducting secondary research, literature reviews, a primary research quantitative survey, a primary research ethnographic study, and a primary research, task-oriented focus group, it was found that the elements within a package design, which would normally be classified as "peripheral cues" within the ELM, challenge the meaning of their given name by serving as key "primary motivators" within the purchasing process in low-involvement categories. This paper goes on to show that the Elaboration Likelihood Model can serve as a key resource in assisting with the prediction of how consumers will make their purchase decisions, and if leveraged in this way, can help guide marketers and designers within the consumer packaged goods industry as they deploy strategies to make their packaging most effective.

About the Author

Katy Romer has over ten years of combined experience in design, marketing and communications – most of which has been focused within the consumer packaged goods industry – from both the agency and the client side of the business. She is currently working as a Brand Design Manager within the Consumer Products Business of 3M Company. In this role, she manages branding and design strategy development (and execution) for multiple consumer brands, which is largely delivered to the consumer via a product's package design. Romer received her Bachelor of Science degree in Design Technology from Bemidji State University and is currently pursuing her Master of Arts in Strategic Communication at the University of Minnesota. This paper serves as the culmination of her graduate program studies and is the capstone project for her Professional M.A. in Strategic Communication through the University of Minnesota's School of Journalism.

Introduction

In today's competitive marketplace, iconic brands with historically large advertising budgets are being given a run for their money by hungry challenger brands and start-up companies with a will and a way. Because of this, the same old ways of reaching consumers along the path to purchase need to be reconsidered. This is especially true for the telling moment-of-truth: at the shelf.

A product's package is one of the most crucial factors in influencing a purchase decision made at the point of sale. It is last point of influence before the product does, or does not, get placed into the shopping cart. Yet despite this important role, the measured effectiveness of the product's package design and communication tends to take a backseat role to the measured effectiveness of the product's other surrounding communication vehicles, such as advertising media, online media, social media and coupon redemption.

Yes, marketers and designers usually, but not always, spend a considerable amount of effort ensuring that their package design is distinct, stop-able and shop-able at shelf through qualitative and quantitative research studies, but there is an untapped opportunity to ensure that the package design and the communication of that design are truly tailored to fully capitalize upon the very specific behaviors and thought-processes of a consumer in action – which differ depending on whether they are shopping within a low-involvement or a high-involvement category.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model is a model of information processing and persuasion and has been cited frequently by scholars from both a cognitive and social psychology standpoint within consumer research. The model suggests that people use two different methods to process the information contributing to their decision - dependent upon the amount of elaboration (effort) they are able or willing to give in a certain situation.

The compilation of theories within the Elaboration Likelihood Model seem to lend themselves well to potential correlations that could be made to the processing of information delivered via a package design at shelf. However, most of the published Elaboration Likelihood Model research to-date focuses on the effectiveness of product advertising.

This paper seeks to discover how the postulates of the Elaboration Likelihood Model can (or cannot) help to inform the development of package design and communication, as well as predict the effectiveness of packaging design during the “moment of truth” within a low-involvement category. Furthermore, this paper seeks to discover how the package design plays a role within the elaboration and processing a consumer undergoes when making their final purchase decision.

Research Questions

Considering the aforementioned information on this topic, the research questions posed for this case study are as follows:

- How do consumers' purchasing decisions (within a low-involvement consumer packaged goods category) align with what is suggested by the Elaboration Likelihood Model?
- How do consumers' purchasing decisions (within a low-involvement consumer packaged goods category) differ from what is suggested by the Elaboration Likelihood Model?
- How do specific elements of the package design affect purchase decisions (within a low-involvement consumer packaged goods category) – in relation to the constructs of the Elaboration Likelihood Model?

Literature Review

The literature review covers a range of reviewed publications related to the historical patterns of how consumers' attitudes and behaviors change between high-involvement and low-involvement categories, the influential role of package design on a purchase decision and the relevant, information-processing behaviors proposed by the Elaboration Likelihood Model.

Consumer Attitudes Towards High- & Low-Involvement Categories

According to Bloch and Richins (1983, p. 69), "One of the earliest and most widely accepted tenets of consumer behavior theory is that consumers, as a group, consider different products to be differentially important." This suggests that there are different levels of "product importance," "product relevance" and "perceived risk" among consumers in relation to a certain product or product category experience or purchase. And while product involvement levels vary widely across each individual consumer and each individual situation, there have been multiple studies conducted on this topic, and because of this, multiple industry-wide accepted common patterns that exist between the delineated categories of perceived low-involvement and perceived high-involvement.

Overall, in high-involvement product categories (e.g. stereo systems, automobiles), consumers tend to form attitudes and purchase decisions based upon a certain extent of interest and concern that they bring to the task, which

tends to be considerably higher, overall, than the extent and interest brought forth within a low-involvement category (e.g. candy bars, cleaning products).

Because of the nature of low-involvement categories, multiple researchers have found that (generally speaking) consumers do not tend to extensively search for information about the product or brands or extensively review and compare characteristics when determining which product to buy. This is largely due to the lower amount of risk associated to a purchase within this category. A common result of this is low brand loyalty. Thus, when consumers find a brand that meets their standards, they tend to stay "satisfied" with it, especially, if they are constantly reminded of the brand. However, they are not very committed, and substitute easily when it is not available (Silayoi and Speece, 2004). In fact, as cited by Auruškevičienė and Maikštėnienė (2008), Hynes and Lo (2006) emphasize that the very concept of involvement plays an increasingly important role in explaining consumer behavior, as it possibly affects the level of brand loyalty, brand discrimination, the amount of comparison between products, the amount and role of information searching, how advertising is processed, and which elements within an advertisement (and presumably, a package design) are responded to.

The Influential Role of the Package Design on Purchase Decisions

A product's package plays two main roles: to protect and transport the product it holds and to communicate the benefits, features and intangibles of

the product. Additionally, the package conveys information about the company, which makes the product, to the consumer. This paper focuses on the later, very important, role of marketing and communicating to the consumer.

Package design is one of the most important aspects of a product marketing strategy – acting as an essential part of the selling process at the actual point of sale. In fact, it is estimated that about 70 percent of all supermarket purchase decisions of prepackaged goods are made at the point of purchase (Rettie and Brewer, 2000), which underscores this importance.

According to Silayoi and Speece (2004), a consumer's approach to making a purchase decision deals with cognitive and affective orientations in the process of decision-making. And four main packaging elements potentially affect consumer purchase decisions, which can be separated into two categories: visual and informational elements. The visual elements consist of graphics and size/shape of packaging, and relate more to the affective side of decision-making. Informational elements relate to information provided and technologies used in the package, and are more likely to address the cognitive side of decisions.

In today's fast-paced environment, consumers tend to shop low-involvement categories quickly – often relying on elements of the package to help them make swift decisions. Noted examples of this throughout the literature review included examples such as color associations, logos, product imagery and the lateral position of elements on the package. According To Scott

Young, “Packaging is unique because it lives on cluttered shelves and has to make an impression within the limited amount of time (often only a few seconds) that shoppers typically spend making their purchase decisions. Given this reality, the first challenge is to design packaging that will be seen and considered – and thus consistently create an opportunity to sell the product” (Young, 2006, p.63). This reality underscores the importance of the visual element of the package design in a cluttered environment.

Contrary to this, as noted by Prendergast and Marr (1997), the behavior of consumers toward products characterized by high-involvement is less influenced by image issues and visual response; and in such cases, consumers need more written information to assist them in making their purchase decision.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model: Variations of Elaboration

In today’s busy world, people are faced with hundreds of decisions to be made on a daily basis, including purchases within low-involvement categories. According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986), people use two distinct routes of processing in order to make these decisions: the Central Route and the Peripheral Route.

The central route requires careful consideration of the true merits of the information presented (e.g. the arguments within the copy on a package). In contrast, the peripheral route relies less on careful elaboration and more upon

existing cues within the context of the decision to be made (e.g. the visuals or brand impression on a package).

Not only does the model propose a continuum of elaboration, which determines the extent to which arguments are processed and evaluated (high elaboration) versus the extent to which peripheral cues play an influencing factor in the decision (low elaboration), but it also recognizes that there are multiple variables that come into play and influence the level of elaboration and the route a person uses to process information while making a decision.

Some of these variables include, but are not limited to, a person's ability to elaborate, a person's motivation to elaborate, a person's level of attention or distractedness, a person's individual need for cognition, a person's level of personal responsibility for the decision, and a person's involvement or the amount of personal relevance within the situation.

The model goes on to demonstrate that as motivations and/or ability to elaborate decrease, peripheral cues become relatively more important determinants of persuasion. Conversely, it demonstrates that as argument scrutiny and the motivation to elaborate is increased, that peripheral cues become less important determinants of persuasion.

Hypothesis

Based on the secondary and peer-reviewed research conducted, and summarized within the literature review, I propose this hypothesis: in low-involvement, consumer packaged goods categories, consumers will, overall, place more importance upon “so-called” peripheral cues within a package design (logos, photos, colors, symbols) than the presented message arguments within a package design (claims and descriptive copy) while making their purchase decisions.

Primary Research Studies

After conducting a review of secondary, peer-reviewed research, the hypothesis was tested through primary research. The goal of the primary research was to build upon the secondary research, as well as to hone in on the specifics of the relationship between the Elaboration Likelihood Model, purchase decisions and behavior within a low-involvement category, and most importantly, the factor of the package design itself within this triad.

This primary research focused on further evaluation of the case study questions posed earlier: How do consumers' purchasing decisions (within a low-involvement consumer packaged goods category) align with what is suggested by the Elaboration Likelihood Model? How do consumers' purchasing decisions (within a low-involvement consumer packaged goods category) differ from what is suggested by the Elaboration Likelihood Model? And how do the elements of the package design affect purchase decisions (within a low-involvement consumer packaged goods category) – in relation to the constructs of the Elaboration Likelihood Model?

The three methods of primary research conducted were a quantitative research study (in the form of a survey), an ethnographic research study (in the form of in-store, shop-along, observational interviews), and a task-oriented focus group.

Primary Research Methodology: Quantitative Research Study

For the first form of primary research, a survey was created with the purpose of better understanding how consumers shop in a low-involvement category. The low-involvement category of grocery shopping was chosen as the focused frame of reference for this particular survey, in an effort to reduce the number of potential variables. The questions posed within the survey were designed to learn more about the respondents' demographics, how much time they spent on their purchase decisions while grocery shopping, how involved and motivated they are throughout the process, and how packaging attributes affected their decisions.

The quantitative research study was implemented through an online survey company, surveymonkey.com. The survey was 10 questions in length and designed for receiving anonymous feedback in order to encourage participation, as well as honest responses. It was distributed to a convenience sample of friends, family and colleagues on April 28, 2013 through a mass-populated email, as well as through a Facebook post. Both distribution messages asked and encouraged people to pass the link along to their networks in an effort to expand the initial reach. The survey link remained active for a total of three days and a grand total of 100 responses were accumulated. No incentive was provided to the participants. The full survey questions and results can also be found in Appendix A.

Figure 1 (survey)

Q1: What is your gender?	A1: Female 74%; Male 26%
Q2: Which of the following best describes your current status?	A2: Single without Children: 21% Single with Children: 3% Married without Children: 15% Married with Children: 53% Widowed, Separated, Divorced without Children: 4% Widowed, Separated, Divorced with Children: 1% Other: 3%
Q3: Which of the following best describes your approximate annual household income?	A3: \$0 - \$24,999: 4% \$25,000 - \$49,999: 10% \$50,000 - \$74,999: 15% \$75,000 - \$99,999: 25% \$100,000 - \$124,999: 19% \$125,000 - \$149,999: 8% \$150,000 - \$174,999: 5% \$175,000 - \$199,999: 4% \$200,000 and above: 10%
Q4: Which of the following best describes your attitude toward grocery shopping?	A4: I love it: 6% I enjoy it: 39% I tolerate it: 42% I dislike it: 7% I hate it: 5% I do not grocery shop for my household: 1%
Q5: After a typical grocery-shopping trip, approximately what percent of the items purchased were on your "list" (either physical or mental) before entering the store?	A5: 0 - 10%: 2% 11 - 30%: 7% 31 - 50%: 7% 51 - 70%: 18% 71% - 90%: 40% 91% - 100%: 26%
Q6: After a typical grocery-shopping trip, approximately what percent of the items purchased were NOT on your "list" (either physical or mental) before entering the store?	A6: 0 - 10%: 35% 11 - 30%: 41% 31 - 50%: 13% 51 - 70%: 8% 71% - 90%: 2% 91% - 100%: 1%
Q7: Thinking back to an actual grocery-shopping trip, which would you say you spend more time on when making your final, individual selections at shelf? (average time spent selecting each individual item, not time in total)	A7: Items I purchased that were on my list: 51% Items I purchased that were not on my list: 49%

Q8: When selecting each of the items ON your list, please rank the following packaging attributes in terms of how much or how little of an effect you think they have as you are making your final selection?	A8: (Attributes: the brand, package colors, photographs or illustrations, product claims on front, copy on sides/back, price, nutritional facts) See full ranking in Figure 2 &/or Appendix A
Q9: When selecting each of the items NOT on your list, please rank the following packaging attributes in terms of how much or how little of an effect you think they have as you are making your final selection?	A9: (Attributes: the brand, package colors, photographs or illustrations, product claims on front, copy on sides/back, price, nutritional facts) See full ranking in Figure 2 &/or Appendix A
Q10: Overall, while selecting your items during your shopping trip, which do you feel that you shop more by?	A10: The package Graphics/Visuals: 48% The Package Words/Verbals: 52%

Primary Research Methodology: Ethnographic Research

While the quantitative survey and much of the secondary reviewed peer research were aimed at garnering information from consumers about their purchase decisions made at-shelf, there may be limitations to how accurately a consumer remembers and re-articulates their actual thought process and actions. Thus, for the second form of primary research, ethnographic research was conducted in the form of shop-along observational interviews (within a low-involvement category). This form of research enabled deeper probing of the thought processes, behaviors and actual purchase decisions made - live at the time of purchase while it was fresh in the consumer's mind. It also allowed for the behaviors and purchase decisions to be observable by the researcher – to account for even the smallest details that may not be remembered, deemed

important, or articulate-able by the respondent in the format of a regular interview.

Two ethnographic research interviews were conducted with three respondents who were sampled through a network of friends and relatives. The respondents were observed and interviewed while conducting a routine shopping trip (for groceries or household consumables) at the store of their choice between April 28, 2013 and June 12, 2013. Each interview lasted approximately 30 – 45 minutes and the detailed interviewee demographics and interview transcripts can be found in Appendix B.

Primary Research Methodology: Task-Oriented Focus Group

With the objective of gaining deeper, real-time insights around the consumers' elaboration process behind their purchase decisions (in a low-involvement category), a third form of primary research was conducted in the form of an experimental focus group.

Five respondents were selected, through a convenience sample of friends and colleagues, to participate in the experimental focus group on June 5, 2013, at one of the respondent's homes in Minneapolis, MN. The focus group lasted roughly one hour and thirty minutes and consisted of three consecutive, experimental shopping exercises: shopping for a package chewing gum,

shopping for a single-packaged beverage, and shopping for a tube of toothpaste.

The respondents were asked to approach the selection of products, a relative sample to the assortment available at Target stores, where all respondents claimed to conduct their regular shopping, and select one item to purchase. After the selections were made, questions were posed to unveil what they chose, why they chose it and any relevant insights behind their selection process – including which, if any, elements of the package design aided or influenced their decision.

This format of research simulated a low-involvement shopping environment, as well as a decision-point, while enabling deeper probing on and group discussion around the topic and questions – without the distraction of an actual retail environment. Interviewee demographics, and detailed verbatim can be found in Appendix C.

Primary Research Results: Quantitative Research Study

The survey resulted in a number of interesting data points – contributing to the key findings and implications elaborated on later in this paper. Out of the total number of respondents (100), there were 74 females and 26 males and there were a wide range of family status and income levels. Most were married

with children (53%) and the most commonly held annual household income was between \$75,000 - \$99,999 (25%).

One relevant and interesting result of this survey is that many of the respondents claimed to either “love” or “enjoy” grocery shopping (total of 45%), followed by a large number of those who “tolerate it” (42%); the remainder of which claiming to “dislike” or “hate” it (12%) or “do not grocery shop for their household” (1%). This result is particularly interesting, as it could imply that, because of their higher than expected level of enjoyment, many of the respondents in the study could possibly be more involved or motivated (to elaborate) than the general population would be in a low-involvement category such as grocery shopping.

Another relevant result of this survey is that the majority of respondents purchased most of their items from a pre-meditated list, as 66% of the respondents purchased at least 70% or more of their items from a list; 18% purchased between 51-70% of their items from a list; and the remaining 16% purchasing less than 50% of their items from a list. This is particularly important, as it infers that the majority of their purchases are repeat purchases or routine purchases, which has an effect on the amount of elaboration needed to make the decisions (perceivably less elaboration would be needed for a routine, repeat purchase).

When asked whether they believe that they spend more time on the individual purchase decisions that were “on their list” (planned purchases)

versus “not on their list” (impulse purchases), the group was split quite evenly – 49% presumed that they spent more time selecting items that were not on their list, while 51% presumed that they spent more time selecting items that were on their list. Because of the fact that the majority of items purchased were claimed to have been purchased from a premeditated list, this figure could infer that while the number of impulse purchases are fewer, the time needed to make them is relatively greater than the time needed to make the routine purchases. However, if the respondents interpreted the question to be within a relative relation of each other, it could also infer that impulse purchases are often made just as quickly as planned purchases.

When asked to rate each of the listed elements of a package and the effect they believe it had on their purchases of items on their list, the attributes were ranked on a scale as follows (listed in numerical order of having the least effect, 1, to having the greatest effect, 5): nutritional facts (3.94), price (3.79), brand (3.05), product claims on front of package (2.24), photographs or illustrations (1.90), copy on the side/back panels (1.60), package colors (1.52). When asked the same question regarding the effect that the attributes had on their purchase of items not on their list, the attributes were ranked as follows: price (3.85), nutritional facts (3.63), brand (2.87), product claims on front of package (2.47), photographs or illustrations (2.09), packaging colors (1.86), copy on the side/back panels (1.69).

Figure 2

Package attributes and their effect on items purchased from list	Package attributes and their effect on items purchased, not from list
Nutrition Facts (3.94)	Price (3.85) (↑)
Price (3.79)	Nutritional Facts (3.63)
Brand (3.05)	Brand (2.87)
Product Claims on Front (2.24)	Product Claims on Front (2.47)
Photographs/Illustrations (1.90)	Photographs/Illustrations (2.09)
Copy on the Back/Side Panels (1.60)	Packaging Colors (1.86) (↑)
Package Colors (1.52)	Copy on Back/Side Panels (1.69) (↓)

(↑)(↓) = Shift in rank order between items purchased on list/not purchased from a list

While the individual attribute rankings are quite interesting, the shifts of attribute importance between selecting the “items on a list” and “not on a list” are also quite interesting – inferring that differences in processing behavior consciously exists between selecting regular, routine items from a list and selecting items that are not premeditated.

And lastly, when asked whether they feel that they shop more by the package graphics/visuals (peripheral cues) or by the package words/verbals (message arguments), the group was split with 48% believing they shop more by the visuals and 52% believing they shop more by the words.

Something to be noted here is the possibility that “actual influence” and “articulated influence” can be different, which is supported by some of the (conflicting) results between the quantitative and qualitative studies.

Primary Research Results: Ethnographic Research

The ethnographic research provided the benefit of real-time observational learning, as well as the opportunity to ask questions of the respondents as they were conducting their shopping - while their thought process was live and fresh in their minds – leaving less room for speculation on how they think they may act in a situation. The data found during this research is elaborated on within the key findings and implications section of this paper and the detailed, recorded interview transcripts and observations can be found in Appendix B.

A few of the noteworthy insights that emerged from this research method are listed as follows:

- While grocery shopping is thought of as a low-involvement category, the level of involvement is clearly different for those who are mindful of what types of food they put into their bodies and label reading seems to be quite prevalent – especially for the nutritional fact information. However, in general, purchase decisions are made quite swiftly during this routine shopping trip.
 - E.g. – Anne and Erik spent much more time reading the labels of the packages they were buying and more time making their decisions, in general, than Reid did.
- People who are highly price-sensitive seem to switch back and forth quite easily between brands without any thought; whereas those who are not

as mindful of the price seem to be more loyal to the brands they know, trust and love.

- E.g. When Reid was asked how he ended up choosing the variety of imitation crab meat that he did, he responded: “I bought the cheapest package because they all seemed the same.”
 - When Anne and Erik were asked if they shop with coupons, they laughed and said “No, Erik never does. He doesn’t even look at the prices! I try to sometimes, but not really! I wish I did.” They also seemed to be very brand-conscious when making their decisions and would pay more if it were a brand that they felt good about.
- When noticeably different, easily shop-able, or used as a standard category-wide cue, color seems to be an easy way for consumers to identify their choice within a variety of options. When color differentiation is not as clear, words seem to be the secondary option for selections
 - E.g. Reid shopping for croutons and making his first purchase decision (ranch flavored) within a matter of seconds, taking just a bit longer to find the second bag (original flavored) - “I was looking for the ranch-flavored croutons and blue is usually the color for ranch (pointing to the bag), so I found that one quickly.” (“And how did you find the other bag?”) “I had to look a little bit closer and then I saw the word original.”

- When repeat purchasing or purchasing a product/package they (all respondents are familiar with, little to no elaboration seems necessary to make the quick selection.
- Beyond brand name, peripheral cues within the design of a package can instantly communicate a certain level of quality on multiple levels.
 - E.g. Erik did not even consider purchasing the bleu cheese that was wrapped in foil because the foil wrapping made it seem of less quality. “I didn’t even consider this one (points to a foil-wrapped piece of bleu cheese) because of the way it was wrapped – like they were trying to hide something and that the quality wouldn’t be as good. I like to see what I’m buying, so I bought this one with the clear wrapper.”
 - E.g. Anne, “I would never buy this (points to a graphically-busy package of guacamole) because it looks really tacky!”

Primary Research Results: Task-Oriented Focus Group

The task-oriented focus group research provided an additional opportunity to place respondents in a low-involvement-category shopping environment, different from a grocery store, while being interviewed. Not only did this allow for real-time interviewing and ease of recall (regarding purchase decisions) for the respondents, but it also enabled an opportunity for deeper

probing on specific areas of interest, as well as the benefits of the group discussion generating thoughts and then building upon them when vocalized.

The data found during this research is elaborated on within the key findings and implications section of this paper and a summarized transcript can be found in Appendix C. A few of the noteworthy insights that emerged from this research method are listed below, organized by each individual shopping exercise conducted during the focus group.

The “Chewing Gum” Shopping Exercise

- While all five respondents claim to regularly purchase chewing gum, only one out of the five respondents claimed that this would be an intended purchase on their list (Nicole), while the remaining four claimed it would be an impulse purchase.
- Four out of the five respondents made their selections based entirely on the peripheral cues presented by the packaging. Only one respondent (Nicole) read the package to determine the amount of sugar content before making her selection.
 - E.g. Anne, Aimee and Sarah found their selections by noticing the color of the package/flavor they were looking for and Brad found his selection by noticing the brand name and then the color of the package/flavor connotation.

- Other elements underscoring the importance of color in this specific category are some of the verbatims: “Wintergreen is blue and spearmint is green.” and “I wanted something refreshing (not fruity), and I saw the refreshing color of blue.”
- Other cues that came into play while the respondents were selecting their gum of choice include: the compactness of the overall package, the size of the pieces, a nostalgic memory of their grandmother always having the Juicy Fruit™ brand, and the recollection of an old Trident commercial saying that 9 out of 10 dentist recommended the brand.

The “Individual Bottled Beverage” Shopping Exercise

- All of the respondents claimed that this would be an unplanned purchase.
- All of the respondents made their selection based entirely on the peripheral cues presented by the packaging (product also comes into play here, as many of the bottles were clear).
 - E.g. Anne stated that the brightly colored beverages turned her off because they seem un-natural; Aimee thought that the water she chose looked refreshing – because of the clear bottle/liquid, as well as the blue color scheme of the package; Sarah claimed that the Sobe™ bottled beverages did not appeal to her because she did not like the lizard on the package and because the packaging looked “dull”, so she alternatively chose the Vitamin Water.™

The “Toothpaste” Shopping Exercise

- All of the respondents claimed that this would typically be a planned, routine purchase.
- All of the respondents made their selection based entirely on the peripheral cues presented by the packaging.
 - E.g. Brad immediately recognized “his toothpaste” (Crest™ Professional Sensitivity) by first noticing the sparkly blue boxes, then finding the smaller box within them, followed by noticing the “pink banner”.
- Three of the respondents found their selections by first noticing the brand, which had a large impact on their decision, as they all had very strong, instantaneously recognized associations with them.
 - E.g. Nicole chose the Arm & Hammer™ toothpaste because she associated the brand with baking soda (without reading to see if baking soda was indeed in the formulation); Anne chose the Pronamel™ toothpaste because she was worried about losing the enamel on her teeth and remembered hearing that this brand would build-up the enamel; Sarah chose the Tom’s of Maine™ toothpaste because she was familiar with the company’s philanthropic efforts and does her best to support local companies and companies with strong values.

Key Findings

There were some very interesting findings in this research study, yet there were also findings that seemed to contradict each other. Further research is suggested to fully answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. This section will address each of the individual research questions posed at the beginning of this paper by using the information gathered throughout the primary and secondary research methods.

Research Question #1:

How do consumers' purchasing decisions (within a low-involvement consumer packaged goods category) align with what is suggested by the Elaboration Likelihood Model?

For the most part, consumers' purchasing decisions seemed to be based on behavior that aligns very closely to the constructs within the Elaboration Likelihood Model. For example, the ethnographic research observations reinforced the fact we all live very busy lives today. While shopping for groceries, people move very quickly, as if they are on auto-pilot – utilizing little to no elaboration while making each of their decisions. As the model suggests, the fact that they are using little to no elaboration while making decisions seems to be largely due to the lack of motivation to elaborate within a low risk/low-involvement category, and in some cases, due to a lack of ability to elaborate (distractions and modality of behavior due to busy stores and rushed shopping

techniques). And, it also seems to be due to the fact that in many cases, consumers do not really need to elaborate, as they already know what they are looking for and simply need to locate it.

Because of the lack of elaboration exercised in this category, consumers are relying heavily on biased elaboration and peripheral cues to shop for both frequently purchased items and rarely purchased items (or impulse purchases). Some supporting examples of this are when Sarah did not choose the Sobe™ drink during the experimental focus group – because the lizard and the overall appearance of the label design did not appeal to her; when Reid quickly found the bag of croutons that he was looking for because of the category-consistent color serving as a peripheral cue (blue = ranch flavor); and when Nicole chose the Arm & Hammer™ toothpaste because of her biased elaboration/previous knowledge of baking soda acting as an effective cleaner and whitener and the brand having an association with baking soda.

On the occasion that a consumer would take a more centralized route towards processing information to make a decision, it was often because they were more motivated to process because of a greater level of personal relevance, which is aligned with postulate four of the Elaboration Likelihood Model. An example of this is the difference in behavior observed between Anne and Reid during the ethnographic shop-along interviews. Anne lives a very ‘natural’ lifestyle and carries a good level of concern for what type of food she puts into her body. Reid was not as concerned with the nutritional value or

ingredient declaration of the foods he purchased. Anne was observed turning the packages around to read the back and side labels of the packages before she purchased them on multiple occasions and Reid was not.

Research Question #2:

How do consumers' purchasing decisions (within a low-involvement consumer packaged goods category) differ from what is suggested by the Elaboration Likelihood Model?

As mentioned earlier, the results of the research (especially the qualitative research methods) largely supported evidence that aligned consumers' shopping behavior with the postulates of the Elaboration Likelihood Model. However, there are results within the quantitative research study that contradict what is suggested in the Elaboration Likelihood Model. For example, when asked whether or not they felt that they shopped more by visuals or by words, 52% of respondents claimed that they shopped more by words and 48% claimed that they shopped more by visuals. The group was divided. However, this could potentially be a result of variance within personal definitions of "words". Some of the respondents may have interpreted this as the name of a product, which the researcher would classify as a peripheral cue rather than a message argument.

Also, when asked to rate elements of the package by the effect they believe to have made on their purchase decisions, claims on the front of the

package (message arguments) were rated to have a greater effect than the photographs, illustrations or packaging colors (peripheral cues) when purchasing items from their list, which also contradicts the Elaboration Likelihood Model. However, on the flip side of this, both photographs/illustrations and package colors (peripheral cues) were rated to have a greater effect than copy on the back or side panels (message arguments) when purchasing items not on their list, which would align with the Elaboration Likelihood Model.

Research Question #3:

How do specific elements of the package design affect purchase decisions (within a low-involvement consumer packaged goods category) – in relation to the constructs of the Elaboration Likelihood Model?

Individual elements of a package design seem to play a key role in consumers' purchase decisions. For example, one of the respondents in the ethnographic research did not consider buying a piece of bleu cheese from the deli because it was wrapped in foil, which he instantaneously (almost sub-consciously) equated to being lower quality because the company decided to hide the product behind foil. Thus, he chose to purchase the piece of bleu cheese wrapped in a clear film – showcasing the product itself. This thought process and decision happened in a matter of seconds and was only revealed as I probed into why the decision was made. This is a great example of how

peripheral cues (packaging elements) can have a dramatic effect on the purchase decision within a low-involvement category. Another example of this is when people shop by brand. Brand was ranked as the packaging element to have the third greatest effect on purchase decisions, regardless of whether or not an item was on their list – following only price and nutritional facts. This is another great example of biased elaboration and how prior knowledge that develops into a brand perception can have a great impact during the purchase decision.

The packaging elements that would be considered message arguments (i.e. product claims, body copy, nutritional facts panel) seem to be of more importance as the level of involvement increases, which aligns with the Elaboration Likelihood Model. An example of this is (alluded to earlier) is that the respondents who were more mindful of the quality of food they put into their bodies, and who also paid more money for the food they purchased (Anne and Erik), tended to read more of the words on the packaging. And the packaging elements that would be considered message arguments seem to be of less importance as the level of involvement decreases. One example of this was observed from the respondent who was less concerned/involved with the food that he purchased (Reid), who tended to place more emphasis on peripheral cues such as recognizable packaging colors, brands and price. Another example of this is the results of the chewing gum shopping exercise within the experimental focus group. This particular commodity was of very low risk

because of its low price and was also deemed as an impulsive purchase by four of the five respondents. One respondent (Nicole) claimed to regularly purchase gum because she always chewed it. Peripheral cues, such as brand and flavor/color aided four of the respondents in making their purchase decisions very quickly, while Nicole was the only respondent to read the back of the package before making her decision. She was clearly more invested in the purchase and spent more time processing the information on the package before making her decision.

Implications

The information and key findings revealed from this research study can serve as very useful knowledge for professionals who work in a marketing, design or consumer research function within a company that sells goods in a low-involvement category.

As supported in this study, the postulates within the Elaboration Likelihood Model should be studied and fully leveraged to further explore the dynamic relationship between consumers' purchase decisions (driven by common behaviors identified in the model) and the influential design elements of a package. For example, being mindful of the anticipated level of elaboration can help guide which elements of the package design should be emphasized, or even removed, in order to capitalize on the thought processes and behaviors demonstrated while shopping a category or line of products. And furthermore, marketers and designers should be aware of the power of "peripheral cues" within a package design. Not only do they play a strong role in helping shoppers identify what they are looking for (e.g. the theory of least effort and the path of least resistance), as supported in this study, but they can also be strategically used to help encourage and invite further elaboration (or processing) of other message arguments within the package.

If harnessed correctly, designers and marketers should be able to anticipate the elaboration tendencies of their target consumer and design their package (and its verbal/visual communication elements) with these tendencies

in mind in order to heighten the chances of their product breaking through and being selected at the moment of truth.

Limitations

There were several limitations of this study. In regards to the primary research conducted, all of the respondents were derived through convenience samples and the numbers were limited. SurveyMonkey.com limits the basic level of service to a maximum of 100 responses, which is why the quantitative survey only contained 100 respondents. Because of timing constraints, the ethnographic research was limited to two interviews with three people. Ideally, more ethnographic interviews would have been conducted, as this methodology seemed to most closely reflect the environment and reality of the situations being studied.

Additionally, the context of grocery shopping was chosen as a focus category for the quantitative survey and the qualitative ethnographic interviews. This was done to eliminate variables within the time-constrained study. Ideally, a range of low-involvement categories would have been studied through each methodology, and possibly, a few high-involvement categories could have been studied in order to further answer the research questions and test the hypotheses.

The quantitative survey results, which did not align as closely with the Elaboration Likelihood Model, seemed to contradict the qualitative research results, which did align closely with the Elaboration Likelihood Model. Another quantitative method is suggested, and if conducted, should focus on wording questions by the means of answering to specific examples of making a purchase decision in an attempt to eliminate response bias. It is possible that response bias may have occurred because of the fact that it may sound “smarter” to say that you shop based on message arguments than on color and imagery.

And lastly, the experimental focus group and the ethnographic shop-along interviews may have been biased because of the fact that the researcher knew each of the respondents. This relationship may have been cause for the respondents to vocalize statements or demonstrate behaviors that differ from their normal activities when shopping alone. In fact, the first postulate within the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Seeking Corrected-ness) would support this, as it suggests that people evaluate the correctness of their opinions by comparing them to the opinions of others.

Future Research Opportunities

There are many opportunities for future research on this topic. As mentioned earlier in this paper, there have been numerous examinations of the Elaboration Likelihood Model and how it relates to creating and measuring effective communication strategies and tactics, but it is limited to traditional communication vehicles. There is very little research conducted on how the model relates to purchase decisions affected by the design elements of a product's package.

This is an important issue and only becoming more critical as the competitive market intensifies. And while there are sophisticated methods to quantitatively test the eye-tracking and purchase intent, there is great opportunity to conduct more qualitative research on this topic, such as focus groups, interviews and ethnographies, in order to truly understand the actual consumers' shopping behaviors and the effect of certain packaging elements – as it relates to the Elaboration Likelihood Model – in both low- and high-involvement categories.

There is also an opportunity to further explore how price plays a role within the elaboration process: whether it has a greater effect within a high- or low-involvement category and which cues it does or does not trump throughout various elaboration processing.

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Appendix A

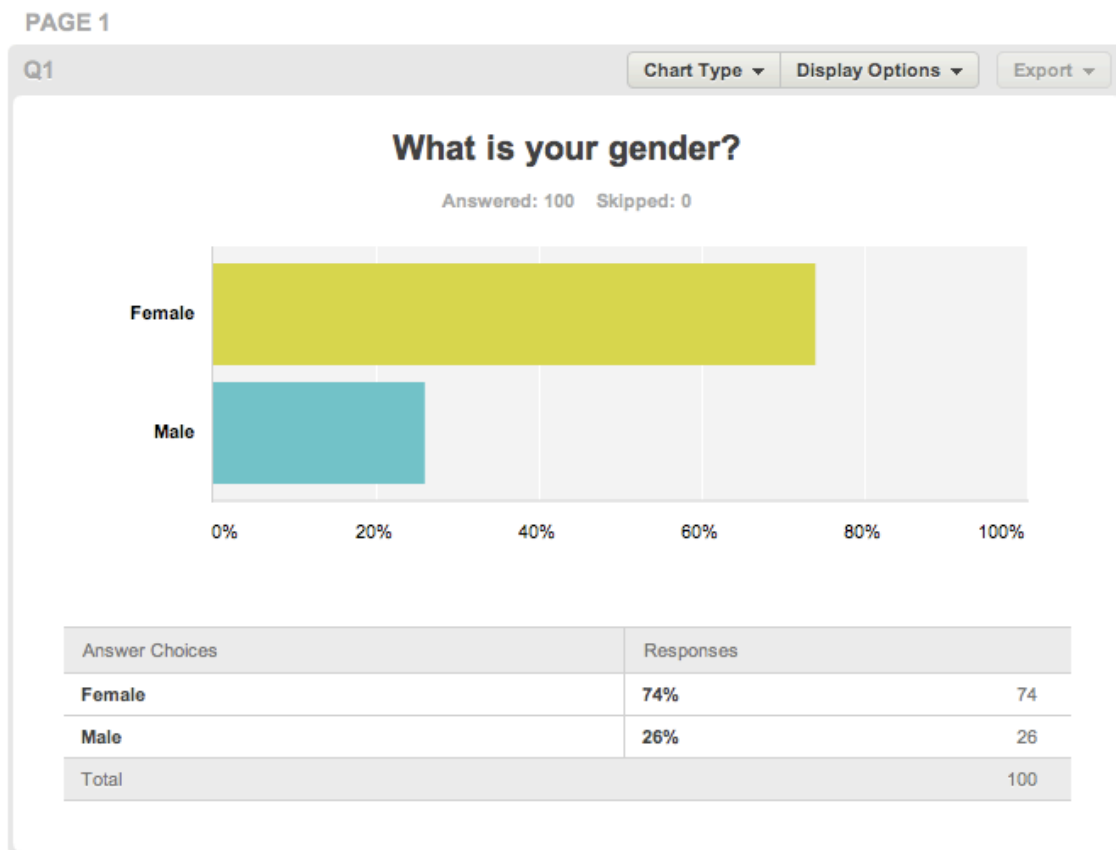
Quantitative Survey

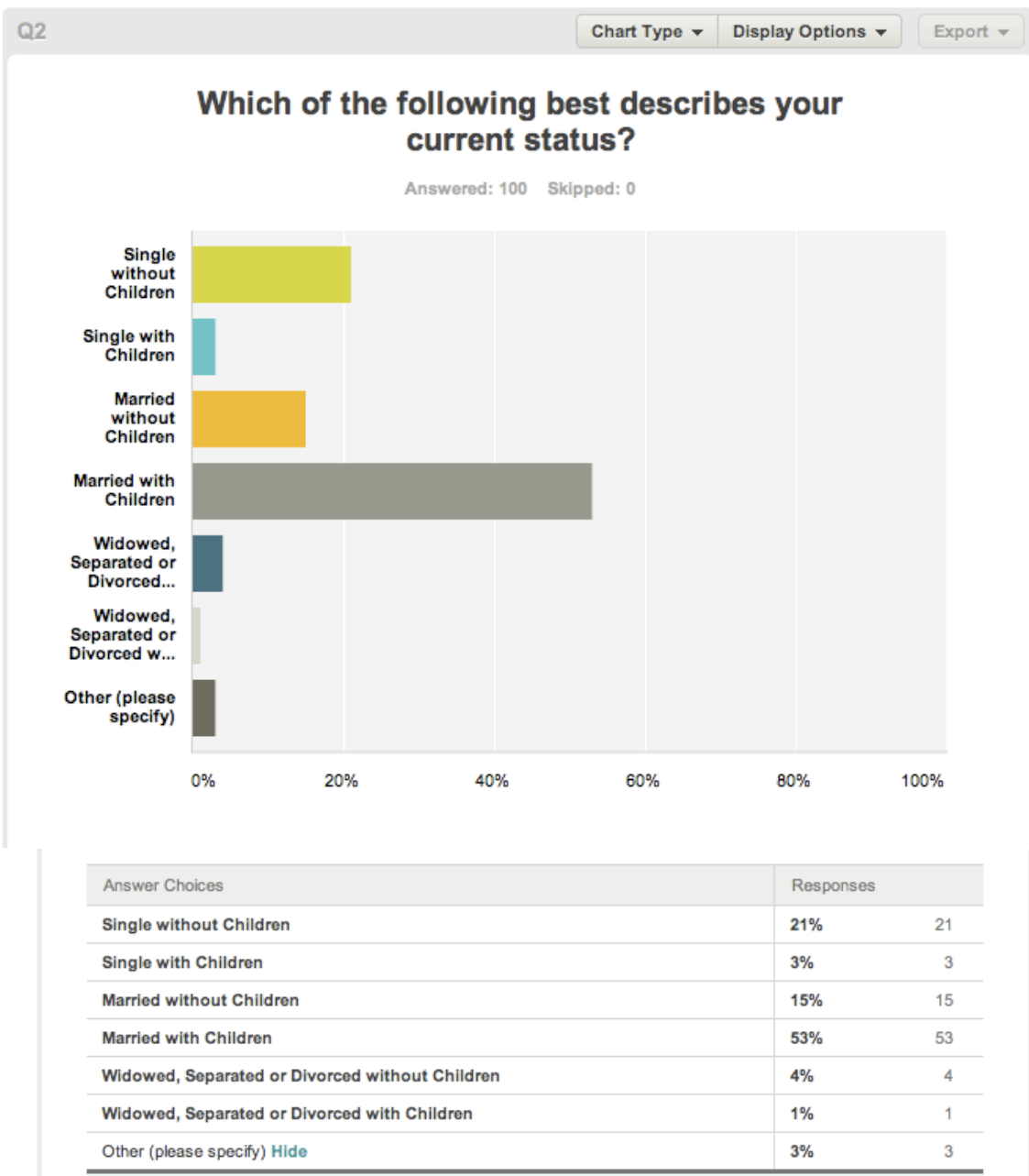
Survey deployed on April 28, 2013 via SurveyMonkey.com

Total Responses: 100 (maximum limit allowed by SurveyMonkey.com)

Number of Questions: 10

Completion Rate: 100%





Q3

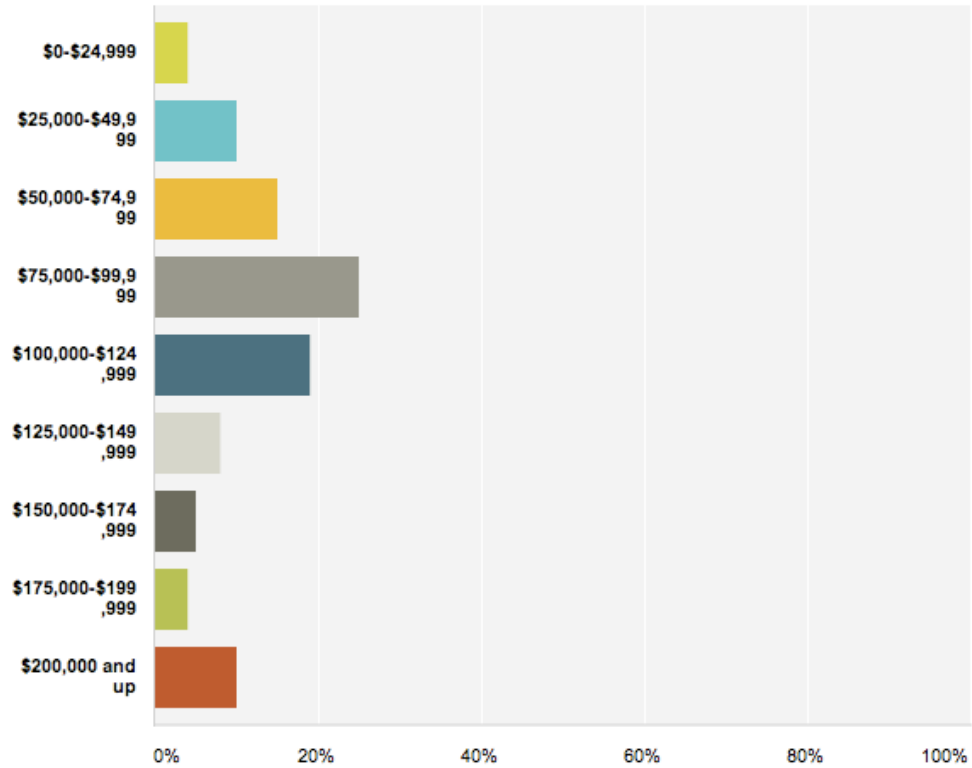
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Which of the following best describes your approximate annual household income?

Answered: 100 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
\$0-\$24,999	4%	4
\$25,000-\$49,999	10%	10
\$50,000-\$74,999	15%	15
\$75,000-\$99,999	25%	25
\$100,000-\$124,999	19%	19
\$125,000-\$149,999	8%	8
\$150,000-\$174,999	5%	5
\$175,000-\$199,999	4%	4
\$200,000 and up	10%	10
Total		100

Q4

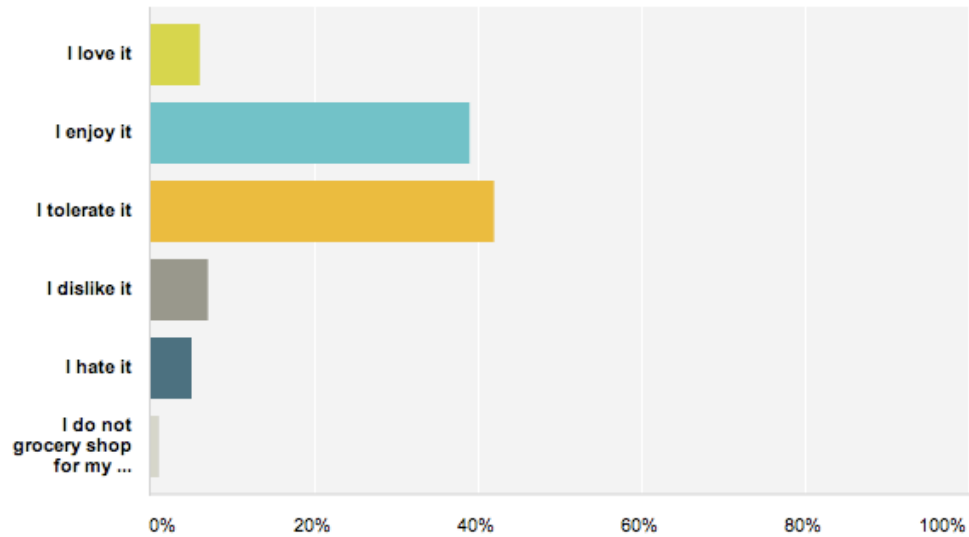
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Which of the following best describes your attitude towards grocery shopping?

Answered: 100 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
I love it	6%	6
I enjoy it	39%	39
I tolerate it	42%	42
I dislike it	7.00%	7
I hate it	5%	5
I do not grocery shop for my household	1%	1
Total		100

Q5

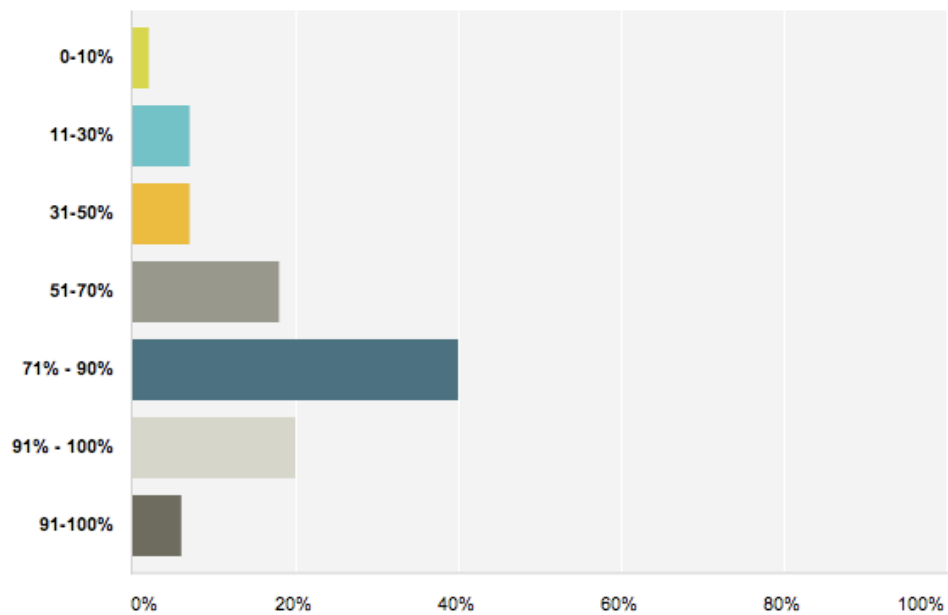
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After a typical grocery shopping trip, approximately what percentage of the items purchased were on your "list" (either physical or mental) before entering the store?

Answered: 100 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
0-10%	2%	2
11-30%	7.00%	7
31-50%	7.00%	7
51-70%	18%	18
71% - 90%	40%	40
91% - 100%	20%	20
91-100%	6%	6
Total		100

Q6

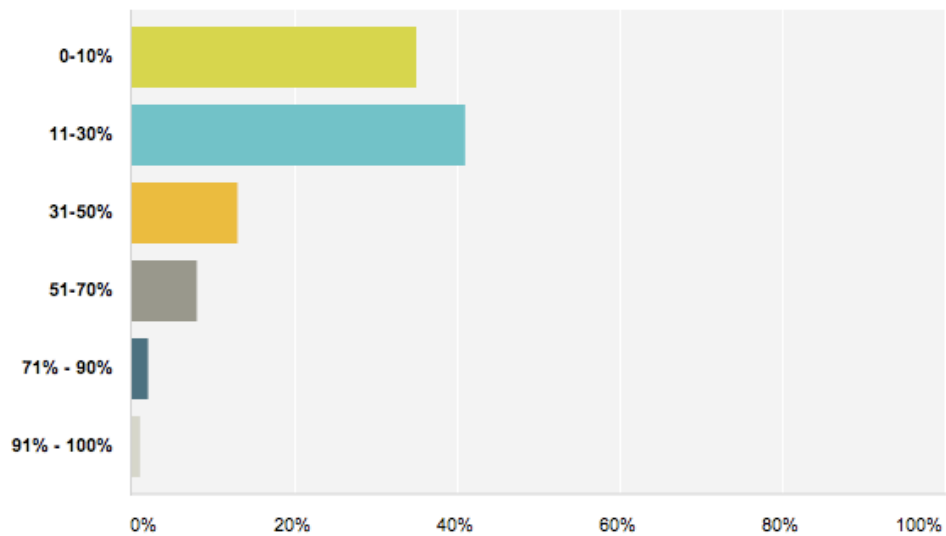
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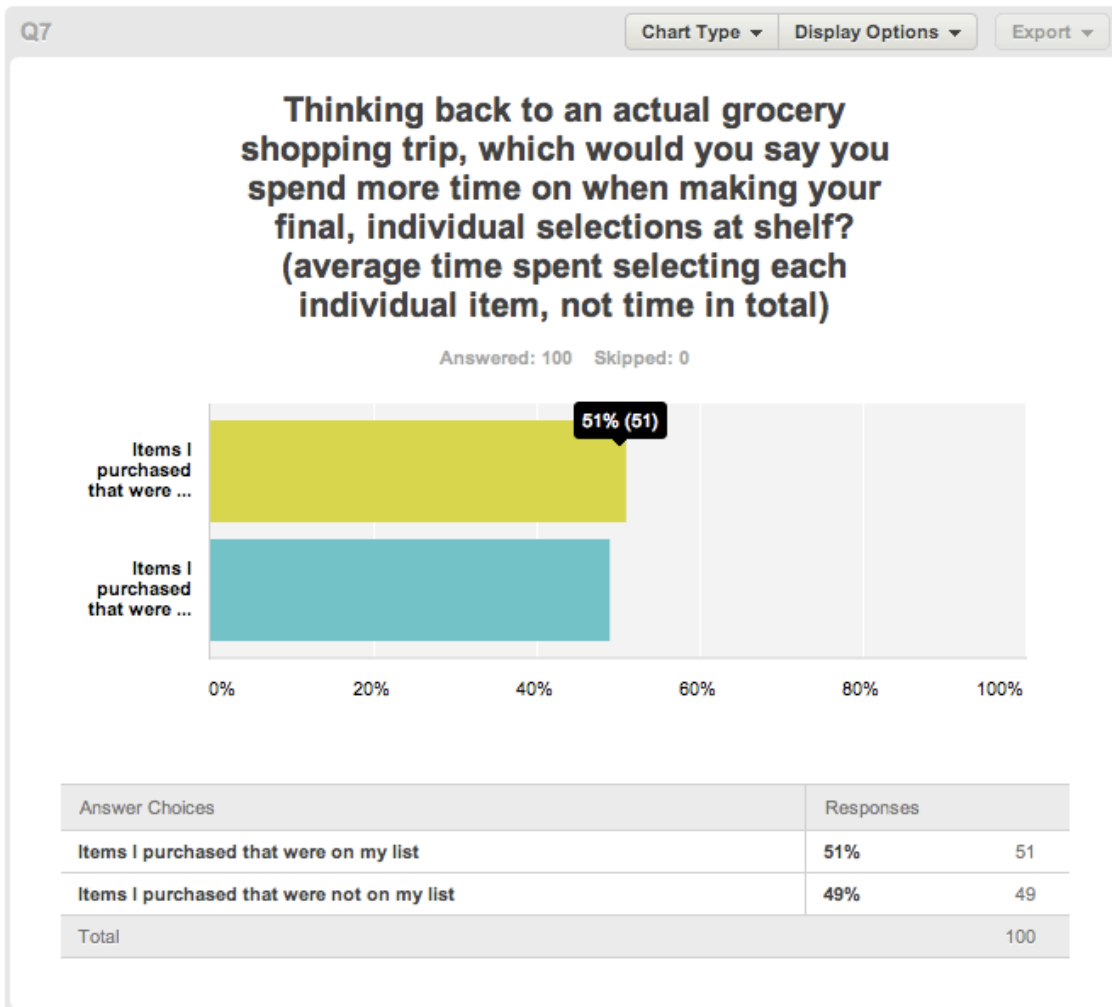
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After a typical grocery shopping trip, approximately what percentage of the items purchased were NOT on your "list" (either physical or mental) before entering the store?

Answered: 100 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
0-10%	35%	35
11-30%	41%	41
31-50%	13%	13
51-70%	8%	8
71% - 90%	2%	2
91% - 100%	1%	1
Total		100



Q8

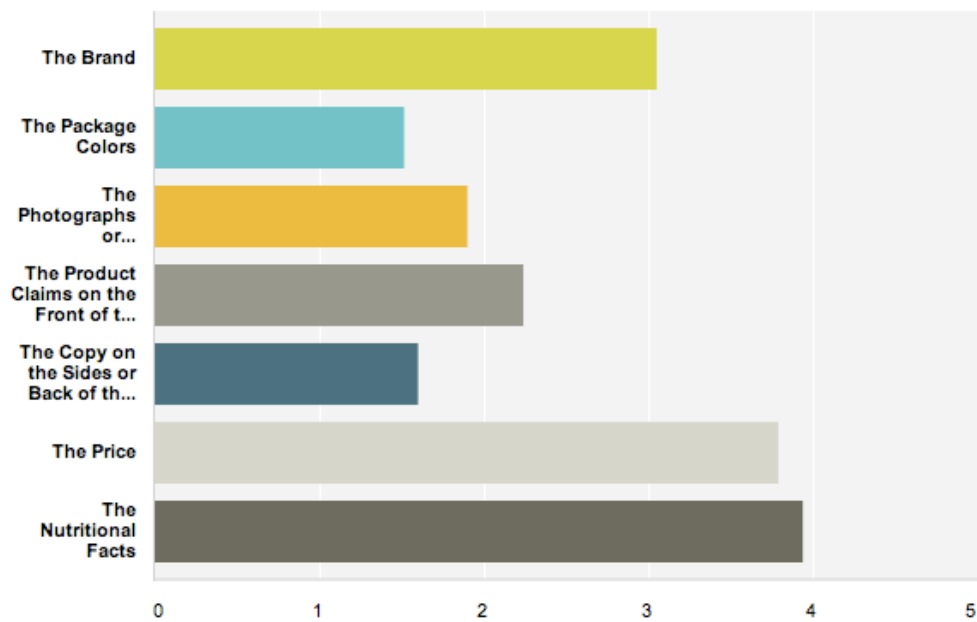
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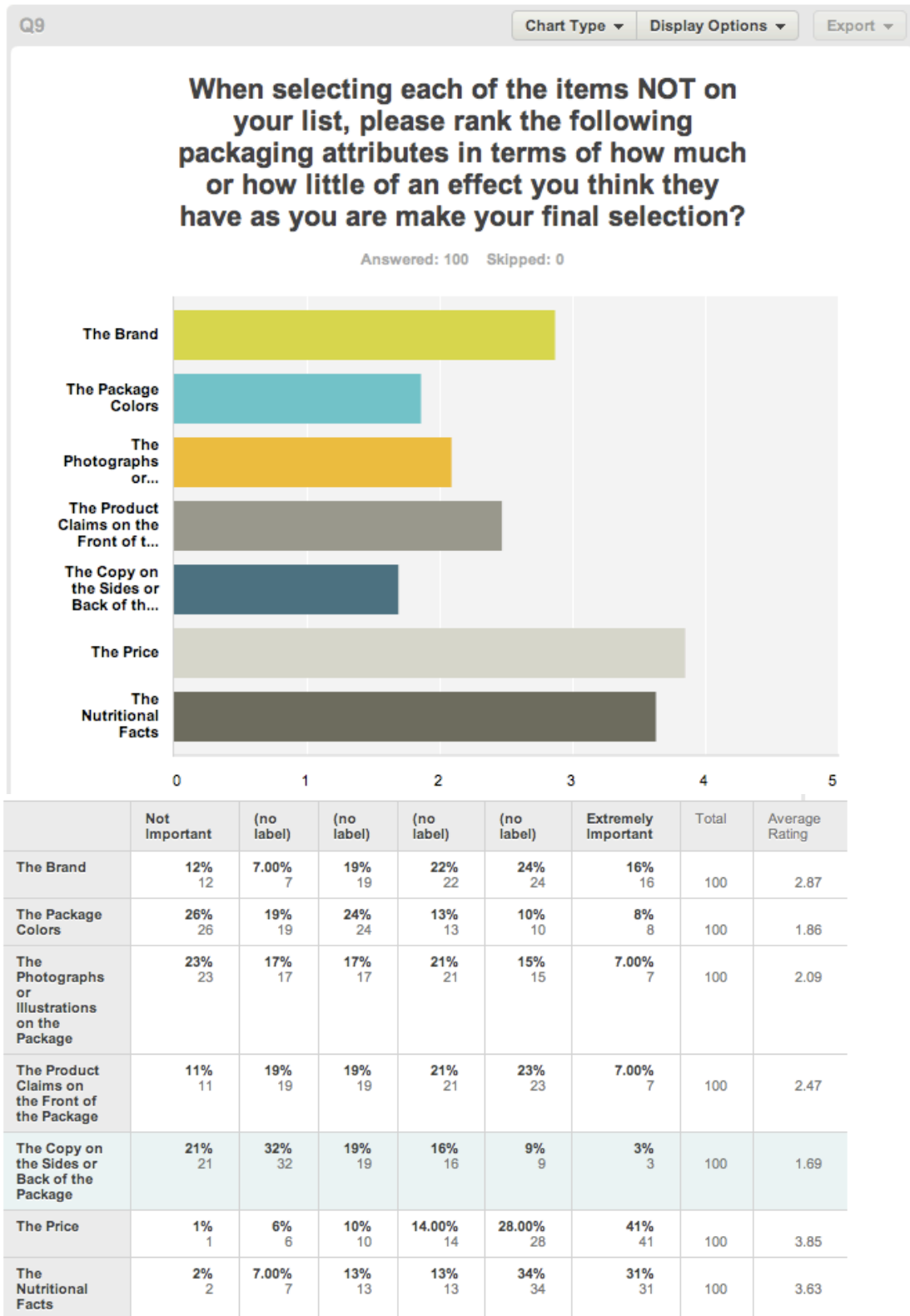
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When selecting each of the items ON your list, please rank the following packaging attributes in terms of how much or how little of an effect you think they have as you are make your final selection?

Answered: 100 Skipped: 0



	Not Important	(no label)	(no label)	(no label)	(no label)	Extremely Important	Total	Average Rating
The Brand	10.10% 10	3.03% 3	20.20% 20	24.24% 24	23.23% 23	19.19% 19	99	3.05
The Package Colors	32.32% 32	20.20% 20	22.22% 22	16.16% 16	7.07% 7	2.02% 2	99	1.52
The Photographs or Illustrations on the Package	21% 21	19% 19	26% 26	20% 20	11% 11	3% 3	100	1.90
The Product Claims on the Front of the Package	12% 12	17% 17	31% 31	20% 20	15% 15	5% 5	100	2.24
The Copy on the Sides or Back of the Package	25% 25	29.00% 29	23% 23	10% 10	10% 10	3% 3	100	1.60
The Price	1% 1	4% 4	11% 11	17% 17	33% 33	34% 34	100	3.79
The Nutritional Facts	1.01% 1	2.02% 2	9.09% 9	18.18% 18	29.29% 29	40.40% 40	99	3.94



Q10

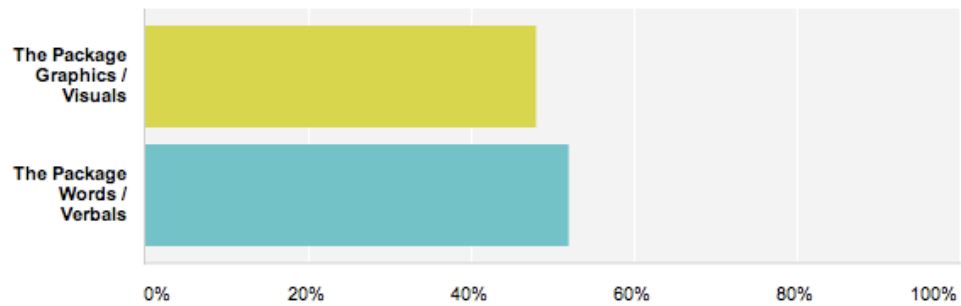
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**Overall, while selecting your items during
your shopping trip, which do you feel that
you shop more by?**

Answered: 100 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
The Package Graphics / Visuals	48%	48
The Package Words / Verbals	52%	52
Total		100

Appendix B

Ethnographic Research

Interview #1

Date: Tuesday, April 30, 2013

Interviewee: Reid, 28 years old; married; lives in Robbinsdale, MN; individual annual income level between \$50,000 – 100,000; Household annual income level between \$150,000 - \$200,000

Location: Cub Foods, Crystal, MN

“How frequently do you shop for groceries?”

- “Every week and a half to two weeks; my wife and I switch-off”

“Do you typically shop here at Cub Foods?”

- “Either here or Costco. I typically go to Costco for most of my meats and some fruits and vegetables – depending on how much I want to spend. It’s hard to walk out of there without spending at least a bill (\$100). I get vegetables and most of my packaged goods here at Cub and I like to come with coupons.”

I observed as he walked around the fruits and vegetables in what seemed to be a well-rehearsed routine, not seeming to give much thought to the regular items he was picking up.

I watched as he approached a packaged food section (croutons). He selected two bags of croutons in approximately 8 seconds and I stopped him to inquire about his selection:

“Tell me about how you just made that selection”

- “I was looking for the ranch-flavored croutons and blue is usually the color for ranch (pointing to the bag), so I found that one quickly.”

“How did you find the other bag?”

- “I had to look a little bit closer and then I saw the word original.”

I observed as he continued around the perimeter of the store and bought 5 packages of sausages (because he noticed that they were on sale) and then approached the seafood cooler to examine the imitation-crab-meat options. He

purchased two packages and when asked how he made his selection, he said that he bought the cheapest package because “they all seemed the same”.

I observed as he approached the bagel category and made a selection.

“How did you just make that selection?”

- “I saw the word raisin”

He was in a very “auto-pilot” type of mode – making swift selections of items he clearly regularly purchased and recognized very quickly when walking by.

“Do you ever buy new things that are not on your list?”

- “Only when I am really hungry”

Observed as he walked down the boxed cereal aisle and scanned a few boxes. He pointed out a box with the brand name “Everyday Essentials”, which seemed to look like Cub’s Private Label Brand.

- “That looks new” (pointed at box)

“Is it good?”

- “I don’t know, but it’s cheap – maybe I’ll try it next time”

He concluded his shopping trip and the interview ends.

Interview #2

Date: Wednesday, May 1, 2013

Interviewed: Engaged Couple: Erik, 33 years old; Anne, 32 years old; engaged and living in Minneapolis, MN; Anne is a student and Erik is a teacher – currently living off of one income (Erik’s)

Location: Lunds, Uptown Minneapolis, MN

“Do the two of you typically shop together at this store?”

- “We always shop together, but we split our shopping between multiple stores: here (Lund’s), Whole Foods, Target and sometimes Trader Joe’s. We primarily shop here because it is close to our house and we get all of our produce here, but we will buy packaged goods or things that are expensive here at Target. We will go to Trader Joe’s for special items.”

“Do you ever shop with coupons?”

- (They Laugh). Anne: “No, Erik never does. He doesn’t even look at the prices! I try to sometimes, but not really! I wish I did.”

I observed as they made their way through the produce section – deliberately seeking out the items on their list and buying noticeably small quantities of everything. They seem very mindful about what they select and how much of it they select.

As they make their way to the center of the store, Anne quickly picks up a package of trail mix/nuts as she walked by without stopping.

“How did you make that selection?”

- Anne: “Oh, I recognized the package from when I recently had them at a friend’s house and liked them.”

Anne approached a display of soymilk and scanned the options for approximately 20 seconds before making a selection.

“How did you choose the soy milk that you did?”

- Anne: “I thought about getting vanilla, but then decided to get the regular.

“Did you choose by the picture or by the words?”

- “I had to look for the word regular, but it took me a minute”

Erik approached the hummus section and studied the section for about 30-45 seconds. When I asked him what he was looking for and how he ended up making his selection, he answered that he was thinking about buying one brand, but then decided on another brand because he found the flavor he was looking for faster – by the color of the product.

I watched as they approached the cheese category in the deli and looked at various cheeses and talked about the price per pound of each. Erik ended up selecting a wedge of bleu cheese.

“How did you make your final selection?”

- Erik: “I didn’t even consider this one (points to a foil-wrapped cheese) because of the way it was wrapped – like they were trying to hide something and that the quality wouldn’t be as good. I like to see what I’m buying, so I bought this one with the clear wrapper.”

Anne approached a display of Wisecracker branded crackers.

- Anne: “See, I would consider buying this package, even though it isn’t on my list, because the fun font caught my attention. I like this sort of stuff on a package. But I would never buy this (points to a package of guacamole) because it looks really tacky.”

At this point, it seemed as if she knew what I was looking to learn and was trying to offer unsolicited, helpful advice.

They then concluded their shopping trip and the interview ended.



Photo of Anne and Erik at Lund's (Ethnographic Interview)

Appendix C

Task-Oriented Focus Group

Discussion Guide:

INTRO:

- Summary of why we are here (contribution to a Capstone Project for a Graduate Program at the U of MN).
- Be vocal; there are no wrong answers.

ROUND TABLE INTRODUCTIONS/ICE BREAKERS:

- State your name; family household; where you work; what you do for fun
- How many times per week do you shop for toiletry/HH items? Where?
- Think back to a typical shopping trip: how much time do you spend doing it? Do you use a list or browse, or both? Do you enjoy it or not?

SHOPPING EXERCISES

- GUM
 - Would this item typically be an item on your list or more of an impulse purchase?
 - What item did you decide to purchase?
 - Have you used it before?
 - Why did you select what you did?
 - What elements on the package contributed to your decision or helped you make your decision?
- INDIVIDUALLY-BOTTLED BEVERAGES
 - Would this item typically be an item on your list or more of an impulse purchase?
 - What item did you decide to purchase?
 - Have you used it before?
 - Why did you select what you did?
 - What elements on the package contributed to your decision or helped you make your decision?
- TOOTHPASTE
 - Would this item typically be an item on your list or more of an impulse purchase?
 - What item did you decide to purchase?
 - Have you used it before?

- Why did you select what you did?
- What elements on the package contributed to your decision or helped you make your decision?



Photo of Task-Oriented Focus Group Participants during a Shopping Exercise

Official Transcript: 1:05:25 (120 MB) from 6/5/2013:
See Audio File

Condensed Transcript:

(INTRODUCTIONS/SHOPPING BEHAVIORS)

I'm Anne, I live with my fiancé, Erik; I just graduated from grad school in speech language pathology – and I have an interview next week! I enjoy running and playing volleyball. I usually get those items once a month at Target.

I'm Nicole, I live with those two (Aimee/Brad); I'm a flight attendant and traveling is what I enjoy. I shop for toiletries every other week and usually buy in bulk at Costco and Target.

I'm Aimee, I'm a nurse – pediatric ICU at Amplatz Children's Hospital; I live here; and enjoy traveling and being active and hanging out with my family and friends. I shop exclusively at Target at random intervals.

I'm Sarah and I live with my husband, Mark, and our two dogs. I'm a Physicians Assistant part-time and a yoga therapist part-time. I work at Tria Orthopedic Center. I do a lot of therapeutic yoga with my patients. Mark usually does the Costco runs and if I go and get it, it will be once every other month – at Target. Sometimes at Whole Foods if I'm getting something more natural and already there shopping for food.

I'm Brad, I work at Twin Cities Orthopedics as a Sports Medicine Doctor, so I'm your competitor! I like to play soccer for fun; and participate in multiple organizations around town. I used to go weekly at Target, but now that Nicole and Aimee are here, I probably only go once a month.

(SHOPPING EXERCISE #1: GUM)

Anne: I buy a lot of gum! I might not write it on a list, but in the back of my head, I'd know that I would be picking up gum. I chose the Green Trident. Spearmint. I picked it b/c they are smaller pieces and I like the spearmint flavor. I think in the back of my mind, I remember the old commercials: "9 out of 10 dentists prefer..." . I immediately saw the Trident and the green color and knew that was what I wanted. I didn't even look at the other gums that weren't Trident.

Nicole: I chose Juicyfruit. This is something that I would get. I also buy a lot of gum. I checked all of the gum to see which one had actual sugar instead of artificial sweetener. And since Hubba Bubba wasn't there, I chose JuicyFruit. My Grandma Roth used to always put Juicy Fruit in her care packages for me.

Aimee: I also chose the Trident Spearmint, but it would be an impulse purchase for me. I like the small pieces and the refreshing flavor of spearmint. It lasts a while, too. (what elements of the package helped you find what you were looking for?) I was looking for green or blue – a refreshing flavor. I don't care for the sweet flavors.

Sarah: I chose Trident Tropical. I've had it before. I don't buy gum regularly, but I have this 4th grader who is always asking me for gum and I was thinking of her and what she would like. I don't like minty as much; I like the fruity. I like the compactness of the package. I think of it as less waste.

Brad: I chose the dark green orbit. Whatever flavor that is – it's spearmint. I always buy Orbit. Orbit is a newer brand and I like the commercials! I buy gum

for the office and it's always Orbit. I normally get the Orbit blue or red, but it wasn't there, so I got the green. I like the Orbit brand. I will buy it less as a treat and more as a function – to make sure I have good breath when I'm working with patients.

(SHOPPING EXERCISE #2: INDIVIDUALLY-BOTTLED BEVERAGES)

Anne: I went with the Smartwater. I would've chosen sparkling water, but it wasn't up there. I often take Vitamin Water from Sarah out of her garage! I don't like sweet drinks very much. Even though I'm such a color person with the gum, the colors here really turn me off. I think that there must be so much artificial stuff in them. And, I like the Smartwater bottle, I'll reuse it multiple times.

Nicole: I chose the pink one (Market Pantry Kiwi Strawberry). I don't drink any carbonation, which eliminated a ton of the colored ones. I went for the color because it usually screams sugar! But I know the VitaminWater Zero doesn't have sugar.

Aimee: I bought the Smartwater. I wanted something refreshing. I didn't want carbonation or sweet. It looked super refreshing – maybe because of the clear and blue and the backdrop? Now, if it were a day that I was hungover, I may have bought something with more flavor like a Vitamin Water!

Sarah: VitaminWater Zero. (which one?) The bright pink one. I was going to choose one of the carbonated ones, if it were a really hot day. I saw this, because of elimination of the other ones. I've tried the coconut water, but don't like it and I refuse to buy bottled regular water because I will just use my water bottle. (did you think about the sobe waters at all?) I've tried them, but don't like them.

Aimee: Me too. There is nothing about the Sobe waters that draw me to them. I don't like the packaging

Nicole: Me too. I don't like those lizards! But, Jennifer Anniston is the spokesperson for Smartwater!

Brad: I chose the Smartwater! I'm a water drinker. I always have a bottle of water near me because I do a lot of talking and lecturing. I know I can trust it. With the others, god knows how it was made and what was put into it?! I would consider a tea if it were a hot day; I don't drink soda. Haven't for 20 years. (when you talk about not being able to trust some of the other drinks, are there any cues or elements of the other stuff that make you not trust it?). Yeah, it was

the law that was passed in 1994 – the act that made these dietary supplements not be required to be labeled properly. There is no 3rd or 4th party that checks the labeling. Even though they have nutrition facts, it doesn't accurately depict exactly what is in these things. It's a multi-billion dollar industry and it's never going to go the other way.

(SHOPPING EXERCISE #3: TOOTHPASTE)

Brad: Crest Sensitivity. It's what I always buy. (How did you recognize it if it is what you always buy?) The blue color. The type of blue – the sparkly blue, not the dull blue. Boom – where's the dark blue sparkly Crest? Also, it's a smaller box and the pink stands out. Pink is for sensitivity, so the combination of the pink and the sparkly blue. They all have sensitivity ones, but the Crest one gives me a little more 'pop'!

Sarah: I went for Tom's (of Maine). That's what I always get. I recognize it because of the white and the big Tom's. Tom's is more expensive, but I choose it because of research I've done on the company and the philanthropic things they do. The efforts they have as a company. They're smaller, more sustainable, their practices and they try to be global stewards. I tend to steer more towards smaller or local companies with an intention behind what they are selling.

Aimee: I went with the Arm & Hammer Peroxicare. I was torn though, because I like the small Crest bottle that comes out nice and neat. I think I chose it because Nicole has sold me on using baking soda and peroxide to whiten teeth. I chose it because of the Arm & Hammer and the refreshing blue color on the package. (how did you know it had baking soda in it?) The Arm & Hammer logo only – I didn't read, I just knew. I liked the 33% more too because of the value.

Nicole: Seriously! Try the Arm & Hammer, It's like Christmas morning in your mouth!! (did you choose the same?) Well, obviously! I immediately saw the Arm & Hammer and chose that.

Anne: I bought the Pronamel, but I had never seen it in this bottle before. Don't judge me, I haven't had dental insurance for a while – since I've been in Grad School. I went to the dentist a while ago and they said that my enamel is weakening, so I started using a prescription toothpaste, but without insurance, I now look for the toothpastes that can build your enamel and started using Pronamel for those reasons. I remember hearing that the Pronamel would build your enamel. (did you recognize the brand?) Yes, I saw the logo and knew it was associated with building enamel. (did you pick it up and read about it) No! I just did based on what I knew (hearing about it from the dentist).